Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance*

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat on his death anniversary and reaffirmed his commitment to the ideals of justice, harmony, and service to humanity.

- **Born in –** 2 October 1869, Porbandar, Kathiawad (Gujarat).
- **Parents –** Father Karamchand (Kaba) Gandhi; Mother Putlibai Gandhi
- **Early Activism – Early Political Training (South Africa, 1893–1914) –** Worked as a lawyer and fought racial discrimination against Indians.
- Developed Satyagraha as a method of non-violent resistance.
- Founded the **Natal Indian Congress** and led civil disobedience campaigns.
- Gandhi later said, *"I was born in India but made in South Africa."*
- **Ideology –** Satyagraha (truth and non-violence), Ahimsa, Swadeshi, civil disobedience, communal harmony and simplicity.
- **Freedom Struggle –** He transformed India's freedom movement into a mass, moral and non-violent struggle, giving it nationwide participation and global legitimacy.
- **Entry into Indian Politics (Post-1915) -**Returned to India in 1915 and joined the Indian National Congress.
- Adopted issues of peasants, workers and the poor, making nationalism inclusive.
- **Early Mass Movements –**
  - **Champaran Satyagraha (1917):** Secured relief for indigo farmers in Bihar.
  - **Kheda Satyagraha (1918):** Led peasants against unjust tax collection during famine.
  - **Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918):** Used hunger strike to support workers' rights.
- **World War I & Khilafat Movement -** Supported war recruitment to gain

political goodwill but remained personally non-violent.
- Led Khilafat–Non-Cooperation alliance, bringing Hindus and Muslims together and emerging as a national leader.
- **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920–22) -** Advocated boycott of British institutions, foreign goods and titles.
- Promoted Swaraj through peaceful non-cooperation.
- Suspended movement after Chauri Chaura violence, reinforcing commitment to non-violence.
- **Civil Disobedience & Salt March (1930) -** Led historic Dandi (Salt) March, breaking the British salt law.
- Turned a simple issue into a powerful symbol of colonial exploitation.
- Drew massive public participation and global attention.
- **Quit India Movement (1942) -** Launched the final mass struggle with the call *"Do or Die".*
- Demanded immediate British withdrawal during World War II.
- Though leaders were jailed, the movement weakened British authority irreversibly.
- **Social Reform – Communal Harmony –** Advocated unity beyond religion; religion to remain a private matter.
- Promoted Hindustani (Hindi–Urdu blend) as a unifying national language.
- Used fasting to stop communal violence (Calcutta, Delhi – 1947–48).
- **Removal of Untouchability –** Considered untouchability a curse on Hindu society.
- Called untouchables "Harijans" (Children of God).
- Founded Harijan journal (1933).
- Renamed Sabarmati Ashram as Harijan Ashram.
- **Prohibition of Liquor –** Viewed alcoholism as a moral and social evil.
- Emphasised role of women and students in de-addiction.
- Supported recreation and self-discipline instead of punishment.
- **Promotion of Khadi –** Made khadi a symbol of Swadeshi and self-reliance.
- Encouraged hand-spinning (charkha).
- Linked khadi to non-violence, dignity of labour and village economy.
- **Village Industries –** Supported decentralised production.
- Promoted industries like oil-pressing, soap-making, tanning, and paper-making.
- Led to the formation of the All-India Village Industries Association (1934).
- **Sanitation –** Emphasised cleanliness of surroundings, not just personal hygiene.
- Practised manual cleaning himself to uphold the dignity of labour.

- Linked sanitation with moral and social reform.
- **New / Basic Education (Nai Talim) –** Education through crafts and productive work.
- Aimed at holistic development of body, mind and character.
- Rooted education in village life and Indian culture.
- **Women's Upliftment –** Encouraged women's participation in the freedom struggle
- Advocated women's education and social equality
- Opposed social evils like purdah and child marriage
- **Peasants & Agricultural Communities –** Championed rights of farmers (Champaran, Kheda).
- Warned against the exploitation of peasants for power politics.
- Swaraj is incomplete without kisan participation
- **Adivasis & Marginalised Groups –** Gave special attention to Adivasis, lepers and beggars. He emphasised inclusive development.
- Swaraj is meaningless if the weakest are excluded.
- **Economic Equality –** Opposed concentration of wealth.
- Propounded Doctrine of Trusteeship.
- Aimed to reduce class conflict without violence.
- **Title –** Known as "Bapu" – meaning father, a title given by Subhas Chandra Bose.
- Called the "Father of the Nation" – recognising his leadership in India's freedom struggle.
- Honorific "Mahatma" – meaning Great Soul, bestowed by Rabindranath Tagore.
- Titles acknowledge his moral, spiritual, and non-violent leadership.
- **Literary works –** Hind Swaraj, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Satyagraha in South Africa.

References

1. PIB |Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation
2. Mahatma Gandhi | Ministry of Culture
3. Chronology of Mahatma Gandhi



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